

## NEW FICTION

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### VARIED FORMS

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH. By Leonard Merrick. E. P. Dutton & Co.

FOR the purpose of serious review the publisher's announcement on the paper wrapper of a novel is usually the last thing to consult. Here, however, is one of the rare exceptions to that general rule. We read: "A volume of short stories by Leonard Merrick is always an event of literary importance. Here in 'To Tell You the Truth' is Leonard Merrick with all his humor, all his sparkle and all his earnestness, in all his moods and with all his own peculiar and inimitable cleverness." There you have it in a nutshell. There is not a word that can be regarded as overstatement. Of course the announcement would serve quite as well for the wrapper of any volume of short stories by Leonard Merrick.

To tell you the truth about "To Tell You the Truth," the volume contains no story as fine as, let us say, "The Bishop's Comedy" or "The Back of Bohemia" or "The Third M." or "Little Flower in the Wood." But those tales are among the gems of a lifetime of fine literary achievement. This book is good, sound Leonard Merrick, quite up to the average of a man who has rarely given anything but the best that was in him at the time, and the discriminating reader will ask no more.

The scene of most of the stories of "To Tell You the Truth" is the Paris of Tricotrin, the best Bohemian of the fiction of the last twenty years. Probably the real Tricotrin is no more; perhaps all that marks his last resting place on earth is a cross and the words "Soldat Francois inconnu." But his soul goes marching on in the gaiety and what Kipling has called the "sane light joy of life, the buckler of the Gaul" of the city by the Seine. Something of the old life has gone, just as so many of Tricotrin's old haunts have gone, with the crazy tenements of Montmartre tumbling down the chutes and lofty apartment house going up in their places. But the architectural setting is of minor importance so long as the heroes of these tales are Tricotrin's brothers and sisters in the spirit.

BEVERLY STARK.

FURY. By Edmund Goulding. Dodd, Mead & Co.

THIS novel is well named; it is a furious performance, starting with a whoop ("Damn the wash! Damn the wind! Damn the clouds!" says Dog Leyton, captain of the Lady Spray, "Damn the endless miles of green distance! . . . Damn God!") and whooping it along at the top of the author's loud voice right up to the end. It is full of sound and fury, signifying—well, perhaps, not quite so much as it thinks it does. It is a good, serviceable plot, if somewhat a familiar one, much marred in the telling. It rants. But there is life in it, under its noise, and some of its characters, especially the Cockney girl, Min, are very well drawn.

It is another case of the savage sea captain who once had a wife, but was unable to keep her. She left a son behind when she ran off with another man and the captain is torn between love and hatred of this boy, in whom he sees the mother's eyes, and so on. Boy Leyton is no milksop, but a very "red blooded, virile" youngster, though he is not an unmitigated savage like his furious father. Boy falls in love with the virtuous gutter snipe, Min, and plans to "jump the ship" and marry her, but the old Dog dies, inconveniently, and before doing so makes Boy swear to find his mother and learn from her who was her seducer, and then to kill off that reprobate. The meeting between Boy and his degraded mother, whom he finds a tavern drab at Leith, is a genuinely dramatic scene, admirably managed. After that it tapers off to a conventionally happy ending. There is, of course, an abundance of fighting, some of it very gory and entertaining, and there is always plenty of fury. Now and then Mr. Goulding stops to take

breath, in short interludes of moralization and meditation, but even these are kept in such a high key that they are not very restful. In one of them he appears to lament that mankind is losing its primitive impulses to fury—"But with the collar and tie again have come the smile and the lie." (An appealing couplet.) "Man's fury is abating. He does not want to fight." But, here and there, "man still lives in the mental and physical simplicity for which God made him, a creature of truth, love, hate—and fury." *Sancta simplicitas.*

There are some picturesque bits of description, and a very real feeling for the open sea. And mention should be made of Looney Luke, the deformed sailor, who

a little the ideal maiden. He and his sister, who has become the mistress of Vigottschinsky, come to grief in the attempted robbery of the aunt, who is murdered. The sister escapes, Vigottschinsky is properly hanged and the hero gets seven years in jail. This period of enforced retirement apparently "cures" him and he comes out to marry a decent, innocent woman, and to meditate (and gloat) upon his former crimes. It is not an edifying business, and is not even interesting, for it drags, and has little relief from its miseries. There is, of course, a place in literature for the study of the degenerate, but one feels that this is hardly the best way to handle the subject. The transla-

not, for not only is little known of the period but it is also generally slighted in most educational programs and few of us have more than the vaguest ideas about the later Greek empire. Mr. Gallizier rises fairly well to the occasion in his description and in the brilliant hued background of his story. The story opens with a slave market, which gives him a chance to gratify several very modern tastes—a slightly eroticized picture, drawn with something of a leer. And he handles his crimes nicely through a long series of intrigues and adventures centering about the beautiful but rather naughty Augusta Theophano and her various lovers. It moves fairly well, though there is an occasional tendency toward confusion due to cryptic speeches, which make occasionally hard reading. But he does not succeed in going below the surfaces of his story, or in reproducing the psychology of the period.

SUZANNA. By Harry Sinclair Drago. The Macaulay Company.

DOUBTLESS the old problem as to which came first, the owl or the egg, has little bearing upon the quality of the owl's ultimate hoot, so it is immaterial whether this story was "novelized" from a film scenario, or whether the advertised "stupendous production" of the thing "at the leading photoplay theaters throughout the United States" was built upon the novel. In either case the hoot is loud and triumphant for it is a very good moving picture drama. But that is about all there really is to be said of it. It moves, with excellently kaleidoscopic scenery and picturesquely dressed heroes, one perfectly good however, can hardly be called a villainess, and two or three villains. It dates in 1835, during the later years of Spanish rule in California, and its historic setting is more than usually good. It is an era finely adapted to romantic melodrama.

The plot turns upon the not wholly unfamiliar exchange of two infants at birth, one of course, being the heiress to a great ranch property, the other a peon. The rôle of "Little Buttercup" is played by the rough father of one of the babies, which is a variant from the regular thing. There are good enough sub-plots, love stories and mercenary intrigues, and there is a very noble gentleman bandit, who struts finely. Suzanna herself is well done, with greater verisimilitude than the type generally demands.



Among the Season's Picture Books. "Hamlet." Illustrated by John Austen. (E. P. Dutton & Co.)

writes poetry, some of which is real poetry, too—

Wondrous are the women  
What trips our sturdy beams,  
Because they ain't here really,  
They're only in our dreams.

PHANTOM. By Gerhart Hauptmann. B. W. Huebsch.

IT is to be hoped that the English reader who takes up this translation may have already met Hauptmann in some of his other work, for this specimen would give a poor impression of his real genius. It is very far from the Hauptmann of *Fuhrmann Henschel*, who is a consummate dramatist of nearly the highest order, or from the poet Hauptmann of *Die Versunkene Glocke*. For this is a morbid, pathological study, a decadent performance. It is managed with skill and it may be that the analyses of the states of mind of the central figure are correct enough, but they belong too much to the records of a hospital for the insane to be soundly interesting as material for fiction. And now and then one feels just a little gloating over the filth.

The hero is a criminal lunatic. He starts his career by falling in love, or rather into an obsession, for a thirteen-year-old girl, in whom he sees the ideal of beauty, the phantom of the ideal. To attain that ideal he takes up with a degenerate rascal, Vigottschinsky, with whom he plots to rob his wealthy aunt; he acquires a mistress partly because he imagines her to resemble

tion is by Bayard Quincy Morgan, and might have been a good deal better.

FANTINE AVENEL. By Lucie Lacoste. Cornhill Publishing Company.

THIS is a story straight out of a weird movie land. It might do well enough as a screen serial, for one does see the shadows of men and women moving as these figures move, on the wriggling film—but nowhere else. There is, however, one passage of better quality and of some real pathos in the adventures of the young French woman who cannot speak English and who has a hard time in the wilds of America. The story is a tissue of extravagant adventure; a young girl who is a remote literary relative of *Oliver Twist* and is mixed up with naughty folk. She is sent into a house to steal, gets into the wrong apartment, and has no end of trouble. Of course she is really very noble; there is a deal of false nobility and false crime in the thing, which is wholly artificial.

THE LOTUS WOMAN. By Nathan Gallizier. Boston: The Page Company.

MR. GALLIZIER had a very promising field for the highly colored historical novel in his choice of Constantinople of the tenth century for his romance of intrigue and passion. It is a comparatively untouched era for the novelist, and it gives plenty of room for the picturesque. Furthermore, not one reader in a thousand is in position to tell whether his history is "on straight" or



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